

"UNDINE" 9

A LIBERAL EDUCATION.

"All knowledge for all men".

Comenius

"Books, we know,
Are a substantial ~~pastime~~ world, both pure & good;
Round which, with tendrils strong as flesh & blood,
Our pastime & our happiness will grow."

The Prelude

Preface.

It would seem a far cry from "Undine" to "a liberal education", but there is a point of contact between the two; a soul awoke within a sea-maiden at the touch of love; so, I have to tell of the awakening of a 'general soul' at the touch of knowledge. ~~Two~~ ^{Four} years ago the 'soul' of a class of forty children in a village school awoke simultaneously at this magic touch & has remained awake. We know that religion can awaken souls, that love makes a new man, that the call of a vocation may do it, & in the age of the Renaissance men's souls, the general soul, awoke to knowledge; but this appeal rarely reaches the modern soul; & notwithstanding the pleasantness attending lessons & marks in all our schools, I believe the ardour for knowledge in the children of this mining village is a phenomenon that indicates new possibilities. It may be that the souls of all children are waiting for the call of knowledge to awaken them to delightful living.

This is how Mrs Petrie Steinthal who has been the happy instigator of the movement writes, - "Think off the meaning of this in the lives of the children, disciplined lives, & no lawless strikes, justice, an end to class warfare, developed intellects & no market for trashy & corrupt literature. We shall, or rather they will, live in a redeemed world." This was written in a moment of enthusiasm on hearing that ^{A Union} ~~the~~ County Council of the West Riding had accepted a certain scheme of work for this pioneer school; enthusiasm sees the fields already white to harvest, but indeed the event is likely to justify high expectations. *There's less than you see*
was passed since that pioneer school made its first
attempt - already thousands of children in many
elementary schools working under numerous County
Councils, no wonder that children are for delight!

No doubt children are very well taught & very happy in their lessons as things are, & this was especially true of the school in question; yet both teachers & children find an immeasurable difference between the casual interest aroused by marks, pleasing lessons & other school devices & the sort of steady avidity for knowledge that comes with the awakened soul. The children have converted the school Inspectors; "and the English;" said one of these in astonishment as he listened to their long, graphic, dramatic relations of what they had heard. The County Council have watched the experiment with singular care.

In the course of a quarter of a century we (including many fellow workers) have had thousands of children in our schools, home & other, working on the lines of Dean Colet's prayer for St Paul's School, - "Pray for the children to prosper in good life & good literature," and practically all of them grow up with such principles & pursuits as make for happy & useful living. *citizenship*

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I am following an unusual course in publishing specimens of the examination work of a score or two of children but it is not possible in any other way to exhibit the results of the theory & practice I advocate. Perhaps 'education' would gain in value if it were not the general custom to conduct school work in camera; as it is, parents & the public are in the dark with only such knowledge of what is being done as is to be obtained from the lists published by examining bodies.

I should like to add that we have no "axe to grind"; the public good is our sole object; & I shall describe ^{appreciate} in a concluding note to this volume how easily what seem to be ~~exclusive~~ ^{exclusive} methods may be made available in any school.

The chapters on "Knowledge, the Basis of National Strength", have appeared as a series of letters to the Educational Supplement of The Times. ^{edit} ~~Other chapters were originally addressed~~ The matter under the heading of "A liberal Education in Practice" is contributed by children in the Parents' Union School; delivered at conferences of the Parents' Union during 13 years in which I have urged this unusual method of education from a number of different points of view. *ambitious* *PTO* *C.W. Mason*

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I should like to add that we have no 'axe' to grind. The public good is our sole object & the methods proposed are available in any school.

The chapters on "Knowledge the Basis of National Strength" & those on "A liberal Education for All" have appeared as series of letters in the Educational Supplement of The Times to the Editor of which periodicals I am much indebted for his courtesy.

Other chapters were originally delivered as addresses at Conferences of the Parents' Union during the years in which I have urged this unusual method of education from a number of different standpoints.

I have to beg the patience of the reader who is asked to approach the one terminus by various avenues on the ground that each path presents the end from a new point of view.

Perhaps it is not possible to set forth this 'philosophy of education' without such an all round examination even at the risk of some repetition.

I am unwilling to close what is probably the last preface I shall be called upon to write without a very grateful recognition of the enlightenment of the friends who are working with me in what seems to us a great cause.

The Parents' National Educational Union has fulfilled its mission as declared in its first prospectus nobly & generously. The Union exists for the benefit of parents & teachers of all classes & for the last three or four years it has undertaken the labour & expense of ~~an~~ an energetic propaganda on behalf of Elementary schools. ~~Miss~~

Miss E.A. Parish is indefatigable & exceedingly successful in ~~the work~~ a work she has greatly at heart, - the spread of 'P.N.E.U.' principles among the teachers of Elementary schools.